

Exhibit No. 2
Date 3-15-2013
Bill No. HB 410

TO: Chairman Arthun and Members of the Senate State Administration Committee

FROM: Linda Stoll, on behalf of the Montana Association of Clerks and Recorders and Election Administrators

RE: Support for HB 410

March 15, 2013

I regret that I cannot be at your committee hearing today but I have another commitment in another committee. However, I would like to send this written comment in support of HB 410.

This bill will address a couple of problems that have occurred in the past couple elections. There were some campaigns that mailed absentee ballot forms, along with partisan campaign materials advocating for a particular candidate in envelopes that were designed to look like they had come from the local election administrator's office. This created some very bad feelings on the part of voters who believed that their local clerk and recorder was endorsing a particular candidate and much time was spent by election officials trying to disabuse the voter of that notion. "But, look, it came to me in one of your envelopes", was a constant refrain. This bill will, at least for state and local elections, help to prevent that type of campaigning.

The other problem this bill will fix is one of timeliness in returning voter registration cards and absentee ballot request forms, by requiring the cards and forms to be returned directly to the election administrator's office. It was the case in the last election that one group had solicited absentee ballot request forms and then sent them to their main office in Missoula for some sort of processing. There was a delay in getting the forms sent to the election administrator's office and, consequently, when people were getting their ballots in the mail, some (who had filled out the request forms via the group effort) did not receive their ballots at the same time their neighbors did. They called the election administrator to complain but the election administrator did not, at that point in time, have a record of those voters's application. This necessitated the voter having to come into the election office and fill out another form. Of course, the voter thinks it was "lost" or "mishandled" by the election administrator resulting in more bad feelings and some wasted time. The MACR believes HB 410 will go a long way towards solving those two problems.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments as you deliberate HB 410.